

2/13/02

FACT SHEET

FINAL REGULATION TO REDUCE TOXIC AIR POLLUTANTS FROM THE LEATHER FINISHING INDUSTRY

TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is today issuing a final regulation to reduce emissions of toxic air pollutants from facilities involved in the finishing of leather. Toxic air pollutants, or air toxics, are those pollutants known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health problems. Air toxics are released during the application of coatings to a leather substrate.
- ! Finished leather is used in products such as automobiles, furniture, shoes, garments, and handbags. Today's final regulation covers all processes used in the finishing of leather substrate. This includes the application, drying, coatings, storage and mixing of coatings, as well as any cleanup of the equipment.
- ! The final regulation will apply only to those leather finishing facilities considered "major" sources of air toxics. A major source emits 10 or more tons a year of a single air toxic, or 25 tons a year of a combination of air toxics.
- ! The regulation will affect approximately 16 leather finishing facilities, plus any similar facilities built in the future.
- ! EPA developed today's final regulation in close partnership with major stakeholders, including industry representatives and state and local agencies.

BENEFITS AND COST

- ! The final regulation will reduce emissions of glycol ethers, toluene, xylene and other air toxics from leather finishing facilities. Exposure to these air toxics can cause chronic health disorders, such as central nervous and reproductive systems disorders, and acute health disorders, such as irritation of eyes, throat and mucous membranes.
- ! Today's final regulation will reduce air toxic emissions from leather finishing facilities by about 375 tons annually, a 50 percent reduction from 1997 levels. In addition, today's final regulation will reduce emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) by 750 tons from current levels. VOCs are a constituent of ground-level ozone (smog) which can aggravate a number of respiratory diseases, including asthma.

- ! The total annualized cost of the final regulation, when fully implemented in 2004, is estimated to be \$500,000 for the entire industry. This includes the cost of switching to coatings with lower air toxic contents, and the cost of monitoring, recordkeeping and reporting.

BACKGROUND

- ! The Clean Air Act of 1990 requires EPA to identify source categories that emit one or more of 188 listed air toxics. A “major source” of toxic air pollutants emits 10 tons or more per year of a single air toxic or 25 tons or more per year of a combination of air toxics.
- ! For any facility identified as a “major source”, the Act requires EPA to develop standards that restrict emissions to levels consistent with the lowest-emitting (also called best-performing) plants.

WHAT THE RULE REQUIRES

- ! The final regulation contains emission standards that limit the amount of air toxics regulated leather finishing facilities may emit. The emission standards are more stringent for new facilities than they are for existing facilities.
- ! Facilities must demonstrate compliance with the standard through emissions testing and monitoring.

Emission Standards

- ! The final standards consist of emission limits in the form of air toxic emissions allowed per square foot of leather finished. There are different emission limits for the different types of leather produced, such as automobile leather, furniture leather, waterproof leather and non-waterproof leather.
- ! EPA anticipates that all sources will comply with the emissions limits by switching to coatings containing lower levels of air toxics. Although no facilities currently use devices added on to process equipment to reduce air emissions, the final regulation provides the option for a facility to comply by using such equipment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ! To download the final rule from EPA’s home page on the World Wide Web, go to <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/>
- ! For more information about this final regulation, contact William Schrock of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5032.

! EPA's Office of Air and Radiation home page on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the air toxics program and many other air pollution programs and issues. The address is: <http://www.epa.gov/oar>.